

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2919

As Reported by House Committee On:
Criminal Justice & Corrections

Title: An act relating to local assistance for state narcotics task forces.

Brief Description: Providing local assistance for state narcotics task forces.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Grant, Takko, Walsh, Morrell, McDonald, Wallace, Ericks, Kilmer and Green.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 2/2/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes pilot enforcement areas in three regions of the state for the purpose of the enforcement of illegal drug laws.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives O'Brien, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kirby, Strow and Williams.

Staff: Elisabeth Frost (786-5793) and Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) provides technical and financial assistance to local governments and community-based organizations. Among other responsibilities, the DCTED solicits and allocates federal funding for local drug task forces.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2004, the DCTED allocated approximately \$5.5 million in federal funding to support multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces. The allocation was divided as follows:

- approximately \$3.5 million to local units of government to continue multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces;
- \$611,177 to the DCTED to continue the Drug Prosecution Assistance Program in support of multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces; and

- approximately \$1.3 million to the Washington State Patrol (WSP) for support to multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces and for methamphetamine education and response.

In FY 2006, the total amount of federal funding available was reduced, and the DCTED allocated \$2.4 million in federal funding to support multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces, with the allocation divided as follows:

- approximately \$2 million to local units of government to continue multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces;
- \$330,000 to the DCTED to continue the Drug Prosecution Assistance Program in support of multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces; and
- \$675,000 to the WSP for support to multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces and for methamphetamine education and response.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature intends to provide a minimum of \$4 million for an annual combined level of state and federal funding for multi-jurisdictional drug task forces and local government drug prosecution assistance.

The Legislature further intends to provide assistance for jurisdictions enforcing illegal-drug laws who have historically been underserved by federally funded state narcotics task forces and are considered to be major transport areas of narcotics traffickers.

Beginning July 1, 2006, three pilot enforcement areas are established for a period of four fiscal years. The pilot enforcement areas will work together to establish and implement a regional strategy to enforce illegal drug laws, and are as follows:

- Pacific, Wahkiakum, Lewis, Grays Harbor and Cowlitz Counties;
- Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin Counties; and
- Stevens, Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Lincoln Counties.

The Legislature intends to provide a minimum of \$1.575 million annually, to be divided equally between the three pilot enforcement areas. This funding is intended to provide at the minimum the following for each of the pilot areas:

- four additional sheriff deputies;
- two deputy prosecutors;
- a court clerk; and
- clerical staff.

Counties are encouraged to utilize drug courts and treatment programs and to share resources that operate in the region through the use of interlocal agreements. Funding appropriated for the pilot programs must be used for the enforcement of illegal drug laws and cannot be used to supplant existing funding.

Funds will be allocated as follows: the Criminal Justice Training Commission will allocate funds to the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA) and the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC).

- The WAPA is responsible for the administration of the funding and programs for the prosecution of crimes and court proceedings.
- The WASPC is responsible for the administration of the funds provided for law enforcement.

The WAPA, the WASPC, and the Washington Association of County Officials shall jointly develop measures to determine the efficacy of the pilot programs. They shall present their findings regarding these measures to the Legislature by December 1, 2006. These measures will include:

- a comparison of arrest rates both before and after the implementation of the pilot program;
- the reduction of recidivism; and
- any other factors that are determined to be relevant to evaluating the programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill has been a long time coming and one of the most important facets of it is establishment of the three pilot programs. What we have now in the state in terms of drug enforcement, is a system of the have and have not's. Wealthy communities can devote lots of resources, manpower and equipment into proactive drug enforcement and are able to make a significant difference and impact. There are many small, poor, rural communities that have no money for proactive drug enforcement. This would help raise up those communities to a minimal level of drug enforcement. This is an opportunity to look at the methamphetamine problem in a statewide way and equalize protection for all of our citizens. This isn't just a law enforcement bill, it effects every level of our society including kids in schools, businesses, and health in the community. This is a great investment in our future that would have a positive impact on all levels.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Sheriff Steve Wybark, Mason County Sheriff Department; and Sheriff John Didion, Pacific County Sheriff Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.